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VALUES AS A STRATEGIC CONSTRAINT: HOW CULTURAL VALUES UNDERMINE U.S. FOREIGN POLICY IN COLOMBIA

What We Can Learn From The Alliance For Progress

To Reduce Risk Of Failure With Plan Colombia

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ABSTRACT

The experience of the Alliance for Progress program in the 1960s is analyzed and compared to the present Plan Colombia. Cultural values are identified as strategically significant factors influencing current U.S. strategy in Colombia. Traditional "progress-resistant" values may explain the persistent weakness of Colombian state institutions to address internal conflict. The opening of the Colombian economy seems to have further constrained government policy while benefiting conflictive non-state actors. The risk of policy failure is high. Mitigating this risk requires that political "end-state" objectives be given higher priority than counter-drug targets.

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I.

II. Introduction

In 1961, the United States launched a ten-year economic and military assistance program in Colombia aimed at defeating communism and shoring up democratic institutions.

Forty years later, the U.S. has initiated a second major foreign policy initiative in Colombia. This time, economic and military assistance is aimed at disrupting the illegal narcotics trade and shoring up democratic institutions. The 1960s Alliance for Progress and today's Plan Colombia initiatives both reflect an idealist approach to foreign policy. The presumably shared goal of preserving democratic values is invoked to combat powerful corrosive actors whose sources of strength are seen as external to Colombia itself. In the 1960's, communist ideology supported by Cuba and the Soviet Union presented a clear threat. Today, large-scale narco-trafficking interests supported by vast overseas profits is seen as the principle source of threat.

Colombia today is at risk of fragmentation in the face of increasingly powerful guerrilla and paramilitary groups financed by narco-traffikcing. There is considerable pessimism among expert observers on the likelihood of a successful outcome. In order to better understand the forces at work, this paper analyzes the parallels between the Alliance for Progress and today's Plan Colombia. Internal factors, namely cultural values are identified as key factors affecting reform efforts in both programs. These cultural values tend to weaken the capability of nation-state institutions. Furthermore, the globalization process is placing new constraints on the Colombian government while it facilitates the

¹ Based on personnal interviews of several Colombia experts in various U.S. and non-governmental institutions during February and March 2001 in Washington DC.

activities of disruptive sub-state actors. As a result, the current U.S. strategy which is focused largely on buttressing national government institutions is likely to have limited effects and may negatively impact on broader U.S. goals in the region. Consideration of values-based constraints suggests several possible modifications to current strategy. The U.S. should seek to de-compartmentalize and regionalize its strategy in order to: more effectively engage international and sub-state actors; better align itself with forces it can't fully control; and reduce dependency on national-level state institutions.

III. The Alliance for Progress and Plan Colombia – Back to the Future?

The Alliance for Progress was a ten-year multi-billion dollar assistance program launched under the Kennedy administration in 1961 to "aid the social, economic, cultural and political development of Latin America." It was a direct response to the Cuban communist revolution. By promoting economic growth and directly addressing social inequity through land reform, broadening access to education and improved government administration, the institutions and ideals of democracy would be strengthened and serve to counter the expansion of communist ideology in the Hemisphere. Though largely U.S. led and financed, the program was multilateral in character, and based on proposals advanced by Latin American leaders including Brazilian President Juscelino Kubitschek

² P. 96, Howard Wiarda, "Did the Alliance "Lose its Way," or Were Its Assumptions All Wrong from the Beginning and Are Those Assumptions Still with Us?" In L. Ronald Scheman, <u>The Alliance for Progress: A Retrospective</u>, (Praeger, 1988).

³ In addition to the international communist movement, Latin demagogic populist movements like that of Juan Peron in Argentina were also seen as a threat to democracy. P. 74, Lincoln Gordon, "Hopes and Fears," in L. Ronald Scheman, The Alliance for Progress: A Retrospective, (Praeger, 1988).

and Colombian President Alberto Lleras Camargo.⁴ The positive experience of the Marshall Plan in Europe and similar reconstruction efforts in Japan contributed to a belief that an infusion of capital and know-how would jump-start economic growth and strengthen democracy in Latin America. The program represented classic foreign policy idealism in its focus on creating incentives for peaceful political reform and use of multicountry alliances to pursue common interests.

Early on, U.S. policy makers identified Colombia as a potential showcase. It's strong prospects for rapid economic and social development could, it was thought, make it "an anchor point of stability in the unsettled Caribbean." ⁵ This positive assessment reflected Colombia's exceptionally rich and varied natural resources, a large population, and, most importantly, a civilian government that recouped power from four years of military rule and successfully carried out a peaceful transfer of presidential power despite considerable domestic violence.

The transfer of Presidential power occurred following a crucial political agreement signed in 1958. This agreement between the traditional liberal and conservative parties was aimed at stopping the civil war known as *La Violencia*, and providing the basis for a return to civilian rule. Open political competition between the two dominant parties was eliminated and replaced by a power sharing agreement that excluded other parties. The

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⁴ Ibid. President Kubitschek's ideas were outlined in 1955 under the name "Operation Pan-America." Colombian President Camargo joined Kubitschek in promoting the notion of pan-american development. These proposals shaped the creation of the Inter-American Development Bank in 1959.

⁵ P. 10, US Congress, Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, <u>Survey of the Alliance for Progress:</u> <u>Colombia – A Case History of U.S. AID</u>, (US Government Printing Office, Washington, 1969).

agreement split congressional and local government seats evenly between the two parties and rotated the Presidency from one party to the next after each four-year term.⁶ This served to contain populist and leftist challenges and ensured the respective control of each party by white Spanish elites. By 1966, the high rate of violence was brought under control.

Over 200,000 Colombians were killed during the period of "La Violencia" (1946 to 1966). Conflict was sparked by the assassination of Jorge Gaitan, a populist Peron-like reformer who sought to address popular grievances against the elite through land redistribution and other reforms. A pro-reform general, Gustavo Rojas Pinilla, seized control in a 1953 coup in an attempt to restore order. To regain control, the liberal and conservative parties signed their power sharing agreement and supported a military coup that toppled Rojas and transferred power back to civilian control. A national plebiscite was used to provide constitutional legitimacy for what became known as the "National Front" agreement. Given the common experience of military coups in the region at the time, Colombia's return to civilian rule was seen as a sign of democratic progress.

In this context, the Alliance for Progress program was initiated. From 1962 to 1967 the U.S. provided \$663 million in bilateral assistance including \$44 million in military assistance. Another \$432 million was provided through multilateral development

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⁶ P. 8, ibid. The agreement was intended to last 16 years. Though no longer formally in effect, it set the framework for the current political structure.

⁷ See Paul Oquist, Violence, Conflict and Politics in Colombia, (Academic Press, 1980)

⁸ Speculation of CIA complicity in Gaitan's assasination recently circulated in the Colombian press. See http://www.icdc.com/~paulwolf/gaitan/gaitan.htm.

agencies, and \$21 million from European bilateral donors and U.S. private voluntary organizations. The grand total of \$1.1 Billion over the five year period represented about \$56 per capita (Colombia's population was about 20 million in 1967). Adjusting for inflation and population growth, this per capita assistance level would be equivalent today to \$9.1 billion. This amount is fairly close in magnitude to the \$7.5 Billion proposed total cost of Plan Colombia.

Available assessments of the Alliance for Progress in Colombia focus on political, economic, and social objectives.¹¹ A 1969 evaluation by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee concludes that the overriding political goal of "political stability and maintaining Colombia's democratic political institutions through support of the succession of National Front governments" was achieved.¹² As far as economic and social goals however, ends of decade results, in comparison to initial goals, were quite limited. Per-capita GNP growth rates during the decade averaged 1.2% compared to the Alliance goal of 2.5%. Most of the targets in external trade, domestic investment, agriculture, education, health, industrial production and literacy fell far short. For example, illiteracy rates remained constant at 25% rather than being eliminated, and the

⁹ Figures derived from table on page 103, US Congress, Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, op cit. All of these contributions were deemed to be part of the Alliance for Progress effort. Available figures do not include Colombian government funding that may have been provided in support of the program.

¹⁰ Colombia's population today is approximately 41 million.

¹¹ No discussion on the use of military assistance is included in the texts consulted here. In addition to military assistance, covert assistance may have been provided during that period to help counter communist guerrilla insurgencies that evolved during and after La Violencia. These insurgencies may have received KGB and/or Cuban support (based on comments by former KGB General Oleg Kalugin in November 2000 at the National War College).

¹² Data in this paragraph obtained from p. 3, US Congress, Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, op cit.

external trade deficit was reduced via import controls rather than expanded exports. Most critically, efforts at broadening equity and political participation bore little results. In particular, the land reform agenda, aimed at shifting land ownership to working tenant farmers failed to materialize on a significant scale. In the words of the reviewers:

"Colombia has barely begun to tackle the problems of more equitable income distribution, and the country's social structure remains essentially unchanged, with close to two thirds of the population not participating in the economic and political decision making process." ¹³

A longer-term retrospective review of the Alliance of Progress conducted in 1988 is more positive, but found that measurable longer-term impacts were difficult to identify due to the impact of the oil price shocks of the early 1970s and the debt crisis of the 1980s. The review notes however, that significant institutional impact of the Alliance for Progress could be seen at the level of regional and national institutions, created in the 1960s, which provided an institutional infrastructure that supported growth in the seventies and beyond. The concept of peaceful revolution through planned economic growth and reform was also introduced and legitimized. Nevertheless, even 20 years after the earlier review, progress on closing the economic and political equity gap remained limited.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ P. 59, L. Ronald Scheman, <u>The Alliance for Progress: A Retrospective</u>, (Praeger, 1988).

The failure to transform social structures to increase political participation and improve social equity was broadly attributed to: lack of urgency on the part of government institutions; resistance on the part of elites whose cooperation was needed to achieve other alliance goals, such as increased investments and exports; reduced U.S. attention on the reform agenda as attention shifted to Vietnam, and cultural constraints to social change. The cultural constraint was specifically noted in both the 1969 and 1988 reviews cited above. Cultural factors eventually came to be understood by several writers as a critical factor in explaining the difference in outcomes between the Alliance for Progress and more successful post-war reconstruction efforts in Europe and Japan. ¹⁵

The major political impact of the Alliance for Progress in Colombia was to sustain the National Front agreement. Because this agreement limited political competition between the two traditional parties, it reduced the need for these parties to broaden their political base and made it possible to restrict growth of internal factions that threatened traditional elite control (such as the Gaitan movement in the 40s and 50s). This effectively precluded the broadening of political participation that the Alliance ostensibly sought to promote. In the broader interest of stabilizing a civilian government, the weaknesses of Colombia's democratic institutions were effectively ignored and democratic procedures sacrificed. This failure to expand political participation contributed directly to the

¹⁵ P. 4, US Congress, Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, op cit and p. 56, L. Ronald Scheman, op cit. For more recent perspectives on the role of culture in Latin American development, see in particular Larry Harrison, The Pan-American Dream: Do Latin America's Cultural Values Discourage True Partnership with the United States and Canada, (Basic Books, 1997), and Carlos Alberto Montaner, "Culture and the Behavior of Elites in Latin America" in Larry Harrison and Samuel Huntington, ed., Culture Matters, (Basic Books, 2000).

subsequent growth of leftist guerrilla movements that today, once again threaten Colombia's stability.¹⁶

During the 1980s, the Cocaine trade developed and Colombian cartels were able to establish a regional monopoly on the trade even though most of the coca leaf production occurred outside of Colombia in neighboring Peru and Bolivia. Colombia became the locus of trafficking because weak, urban centered government institutions posed little risk to the industry, and Colombian immigration to the U.S. during *La Violencia* provided a conduit for smuggling.¹⁷ Competition between cartels led to a dramatic increase in the homicide rate, and the corruption of the judicial system. In the past ten years, rural guerrilla and para-military groups have obtained increasing financial support from direct and indirect involvement in the drug trade. Their greatly expanded operations now seriously threaten regime survival. The \$7.5 billion "Plan Colombia" was developed by President Pastrana as a regional effort to solve the crisis.¹⁸

While circumstances are clearly different than in the early 1960s, and the original draft plan was modified at the U.S. government's request to place greater emphasis on counternarcotics, today's Plan Colombia shares many similarities to the Alliance for Progress program. These include:

• A context of domestic political instability that threatens regime continuity.

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¹⁶ For a more complete analysis of this period, see Cynthia Watson, "Guerrilla Groups in Colombia: Reconstituting the Political Process" in Leonard Weinberg, ed., <u>Political Parties and Terrorist Groups</u>, (Frank Cass & Co. Ltd, 1992).

¹⁷ See Francisco Thoumi, "Why the Illegal Psychoactive Drugs Industry Grew in Colombia" (1992). In Bruce M. Bagley, editor, <u>Drug Trafficking in the Americas</u>, (North-South Center Press, 1996).

- Personal leadership by the President of Colombia in conceptualizing and initiating a multi-lateral effort that would attract major U.S. involvement.
- An overarching rationale of preserving democratic institutions and increasing political stability.
- Broadly similar program content including economic growth, and strengthening public services (Plan Colombia is relatively more oriented to judicial and human rights services, while the Alliance for Progress stressed social services such as education and health)
- An expressed desire to institute social reforms to close the equity and political participation gap.
- A regional threat which strongly relates to U.S. national interests (communism in one case, narco-traffikcing in the other)
- The use of Colombian government institutions in a lead implementation role.
- The need for private sector follow-through in terms of increased investment and employment generation to achieve program goals.
- Roughly comparable implementation time frame and per-capita funding levels.
- The same liberal and conservative parties benefit from the stability to be achieved by the program.

These similarities raise some interesting questions. Are external donors being asked to once again help maintain in power an exclusionary regime with no real capability to

¹⁸ A copy of Plan Colombia is available at www.ciponline.org/colombia/plancolombia.htm.

produce reforms essential for survival of democracy? Will the cultural constraints experienced during the 1960s also affect U.S. ability to achieve and sustain desired results on both counter-narcotics and democracy objectives? Furthermore, are the current forces of globalization helping or hindering ultimate resolution? The following two sections address these questions.

IV. Traditional Values and Social Order

What is striking and perhaps unique to Colombia, is the presence of a relatively stable constitutional civilian regime despite extensive internal conflict. From the end of the war of independence in 1824 to the turn of the century, 14 national-level and many more localized rebellions occurred.¹⁹ In the 20th century, prolonged conflicts continued for decades at a time with no definitive resolution. Despite this apparent instability, only three changes in constitution occurred in Colombia's history, and the same two party system has been in power since the 1850s.²⁰ While challenges to regimes have left the basic system intact, nation state institutions have never achieved the strength and reach necessary to create social cohesion and ensure basic internal security through rule of law. What is it that keeps Colombian state institutions persistently weak?

In this section, we outline a cultural or values-based analysis to address this question.

While it has long been accepted that the process of modernization and development

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¹⁹ P. 13, David Bushnell, "Politics and Violence in 19th Century Colombia" in Bergquist, Penaranda, Sanchez, <u>Violence in Colombia – The Contemporary Crisis in Historical Perspective</u>, (Scholarly Resources Inc., 1992)

²⁰ Constitutional changes took place in 1863, 1886 and 1991. See Chronology on p. ix, Ibid..

engenders a shift in traditional values, it is now increasingly recognized that broadly held cultural values shape the direction and speed of modernization and democratization.²¹ A better understanding of the role of values should therefore be useful in understanding the experience of the Alliance for Progress and identifying potential risks and opportunities in supporting initiatives such as Plan Colombia.

The core of the argument advanced here is that the nation state remains chronically weak because the values on which Colombian society is built support rigid class structures and exclusionary politics. Government institutions tend to function in a way, which furthers these values at the expense of their formal putative function. Persistence of traditional values creates a drag that thwarts or dilutes reform efforts even when these are honestly intended. Ignorance of these effects can lead to perverse results whereby efforts to support and strengthen institutions to achieve a broader objective, are neutralized, or create an effect opposite to what is intended.

A brief review of the formation of class structures in Colombia highlights the system that evolved. Two legal points dating back to the original colonization of Colombia are worth noting. First, a specific "right of conquest" was given by Pope Alexander VI to the Spanish monarchs in 1493. This legitimized the appropriation of land and resources in the New World, as the Pope was considered to have supreme jurisdiction over "all

²¹ For recent empirical evidence, see Ron Inglehart, "Culture and Democracy" in Larry Harrison and Samuel Huntington, ed., Culture Matters, (Basic Books, 2000).

Kingdoms of the earth". Second, upon landing in the territory that was to become Colombia, the first royally appointed governors were instructed to read the text of a statement in Spanish to the Indian natives they encountered. This statement, which of course they could not understand, announced the newly legalized jurisdiction of the Spanish monarchs, and required the new subjects to embrace the Catholic religion and submit to the monarch. The text further specified that refusal would lead to death or enslavement. Thus at the very beginning of its formation, conquest and coercion were legitimate tools of the state.

As a colonial society grew, a rigid social hierarchy based on parentage and location of birth was established. Individuals of Spanish parentage and born in Spain held the highest position. Those with Spanish parents but born in the new territories were lower in status (though they may be full siblings of the former). Further down were those of mixed race (mestizos and mulatoes). Full blooded Indians, and Africans imported as slaves were at the bottom. Each of these broad categories was further subdivided and ranked based on mix of bloodlines. Since rank was determined by birth, there was little one could do to change status, and the structure was quite rigid.²⁴ Position in the system was a principle determinant of wealth. Since the Spanish monarch was the legitimate owner of all productive resources (e.g. land and mines) from which wealth was derived, the total stock of wealth was considered fixed, and allocation of assets was a top down

²² P. 3, Jesus Maria Henao and Gerardo Arrubla, <u>History of Colombia</u>, (University of North Carolina Press, 1938). Translated and edited from the Spanish by J. Fred Rippy.

²³ Ibid, p. 9.

²⁴ For a more complete description of the class structure, see p 344 in T. Lynn Smith, <u>Colombia: Social Structure and the Process of Development</u>, (University of Florida Press, 1967).

affair. For the upper classes, manual labor was considered dishonorable, wealth was to be obtained from rents derived from land initially granted through the hierarchy, or from appropriating the assets held by others.

From the time of the early conquest and into the colonial period, a "conquistador" value system existed which can be roughly summarized as: "submit or be killed; extract rather than create wealth; hierarchy is order; and family is status and identity." Social order was ensured by maintenance of the rigid and hierarchical structure of relationships between classes, either through coercion or through clientelist relations whereby loyalty is exchanged for patronage. Legitimacy of the system was derived from its linkage to the Catholic Pope through the original papal delegations to the Spanish crown. The family was the critical unit which conferred social status and determined whether one would live in poverty of wealth. Family honor and status was the principal "social capital" to defend and protect.

The Independence War of 1810-1824 did not fully break the concept of legitimacy through hierarchy because it was initially fought against the conquering napoleonic regime of Joseph Bonaparte rather than the traditional Spanish monarchs. When the break with Spain was completed, the top of the traditional hierarchy in Colombian society was removed but it was never fully replaced by an alternate legitimizing concept. The first Constitution of 1821 outlined a structure of government modeled heavily on that of the U.S., but it did not develop into a sacred symbol of unification and legitimacy like the

²⁵ Jesus Maria Henao and Gerardo Arrubla, op cit.

U.S. constitution.²⁶ Two fundamental cleavages emerged as a result. One between liberals and conservatives -- and the other, between the white privileged elite of Spanish decent and the lower mixed race laboring classes. Elites with liberal leanings favored a more decentralized government, reduced influence of the Church, and a broadened suffrage, while conservative elites favored a strong centralized government, alliance with the Church, and a more limited franchise. The liberal-conservative disagreement hardened into political parties around the mid 19th century. This conflict can be understood as an unresolved effort to fill the functional void created by the break with the Spanish monarchy. This lack of resolution meant that the two-class system was maintained rather than diffused through broadened suffrage. These two cleavages are the underlying source of political conflicts to this day.

While democratic structures and procedures were adopted, they essentially functioned as mechanism to manage relationships between elite family groups. Clientelist and coercive relations between elite families and those of lower classes continued as the predominant means to maintain order. The white elites controlled allocation of wealth, and there was limited incentive to make the political system responsive to all potential constituents. The nature of politics thus remained fundamentally exclusionary and particularistic.

With industrialization and urbanization, wage labor appeared which created new challenges to the system. However the growth of a rising middle class was to a significant extent slowed by the fact that descendents of elites came to occupy many

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²⁶ See description of the constitution of 1821 in Jesus Maria Henao and Gerardo Arrubla, ibid.

positions such as government bureaucrat, lawyer and teacher, that in other societies were open to upwardly mobile individuals. This was due to the splintering of estates through inheritance, the much greater access to higher education of the upper class, and the general disinclination of elites to create new wealth through labor or entrepreneurship. Though a middle class group did begin to grow in early part of this century, its potential reformist influence remained somewhat limited. As late as the 1960s Colombia was still described fundamentally as a two-class society. ²⁷

Harrison and others have described the value system that matches and supports the type of social structure that evolved in Colombia as "progress-resistant." A progress-resistant society is "fatalistic, particularistic, ascriptive, passive, individualistic and familistic, past or present-oriented, and hierarchical, and sees life as a zero-sum game."²⁸

Harrison notes that the "radius of trust" among individuals will tend to be much more restricted in such societies as compared to "progress-prone" societies.²⁹ Mariano

Grondona, in a similar typology focused on Latin America also identifies trust in the individual as a key factor in progress.³⁰ Along similar lines, but focusing on Southern Italy, Edward Banfield describes the concept of "amoral familism," where a culture is deficient in communitarian values but fosters family ties. Little investment is made in building the community unless this directly benefits the individual. Familism promotes a double standard of ethics, one applied to family members and another for non-family

²⁷ Ibid, p. 332 and 339.

²⁸ P. 33, Larry Harrison, The Pan-American Dream, (Basic Books, 1997).

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ P. 47, Mariano Grondona, "A Cultural Typology of Economic Development" in Culture Matters, Op Cit.

members. Societies where strong familism exist tend to rate high in measures of corruption because there is a tendency to see ones' primary obligations as ensuring benefit to the family as opposed to a broader community.³¹

Capitalist and democratic expansion is resisted in progress-averse societies because it implies a re-ordering of society based on universalist rather than particularist principles. Democracy and open markets implies the existence of relatively equal citizens who are free to make political and consumer choices. Disruption is minimal if these practices are limited to members of the upper class, but it undermines a traditional system of highly differentiated class structures with relationships based on patronage and loyalty.

Recent survey data support a conclusion that Colombian society is still significantly "progress-resistant." Analysis from the World Values Survey by Ronald Inglehart shows that Colombia is at the extreme end of a scale measuring traditional vs. secular/rational values relative to 64 other countries. Societies in this traditional values cluster, "emphasize religion, absolute standards, family values...social conformity rather than individualistic achievement, favor consensus rather than open political conflict, support deference to authority, and have high levels of national pride and a nationalistic outlook." Similarly, on a measure of individual trust (percentage of respondents who trust people in general), Colombia ranks sixth from last among 64 countries, with only 10% of

³¹ See discussion on P 119-120, Seymour Martin Lipset and Gabriel Salman Lenz, "Corruption, Culture and Markets" in <u>Culture Matters</u>, op cit.

respondents indicating that they "trust people in general."³² On the worldwide Corruption Perceptions Index, Colombia ranks near the bottom (79 of 85 in 1998 and 72 of 99 in 1999).³³ Finally, it is relevant to note that Colombia ranked 162 out of 171 countries in a recent ranking of voter participation rates in elections held between 1945 and 1998. Voter participation rates were calculated to average just 36% of the voting age population over the course of 19 national elections.³⁴

This recent data is consistent with the history of class structure and values discussed above. The aggregate voting data suggests that many potential voters are either excluded from participating, or discouraged from voting because they don't regard system as their own. The corruption perceptions index data reinforces the descriptions by several writers who note a tendency for government office holders to informally "privatize" public goods. It is also consistent with a strong familistic ideal that favors family interests over the community. Inglehart's data on traditional values seems to correlate well with Harrison's and Grondona's descriptions of progress resistant culture.

Colombia's low ranking on interpersonal trust, seen as so critical to development and democracy by Harrison, Grondona, Fukuyama and others, is certain to be related to the rapidly rising levels of violence experienced in the 1980s. In that decade, homicide rates

³² P. 89 and p 90, Ronald Inglehard, "Culture and Democracy" in Culture Matters, ibid.

³³ See 1998 data in p. 113, Seymour Martin Lipset and Gabriel Salman Lenz, "Corruption, Culture and Markets" in <u>Culture Matters</u>, op cit. Data for other years available via the Transparency International web site.

³⁴ Data from the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance web site: www.idea.int (Stockholm Sweden).

climbed from an average of 20 per 100,000 inhabitants in the 1970s to a peak of 80 per 100,000 in 1991. The rate declined to about 60 per 100,000 by 1998. By comparison, the homicide rate in Peru in the early 1990s was just 11.5, and in the U.S. 8 per 100,000. A detailed analysis by Daniel Pecaut shows that not more than 6 to 7% of this rate was due to political activity (including, guerrilla, military and paramilitary forces). Most analysts conclude that this rise in violence is directly related to the competition between traffickers over control of rapidly growing cocaine exports, and the incapacity of the Colombian judicial system to face this challenge. However, Pecaut's detailed study finds that violence has become generalized throughout society as a means of resolving disputes, securing political or economic gain, and discouraging allegiance to opposing political groups. The persistent undercurrent of fear that this rate of violence produces destroys trust and social capital at a community level. The persistent undercurrent of fear that this rate of violence produces destroys trust and social capital at a community level.

These findings are similar to those of Paul Oquist in his analysis *La Violencia*. At that period, the increased value of coffee exports rather than narcotics was a contributing factor and Oquist notes that violence peaked twice a year during coffee harvests.³⁸ The common thread that can be discerned across *La Violencia* and the 1980s is that intense party rivalry; guerrillas action or powerful drug cartels first weaken the State. This leads to a withdrawal of state presence. Homicide rates rise as violence is used for a broader

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³⁵ P. 3. Steven Levitt and Mauricio Rubio, Understanding Crime in Colombia and What Can be Done About It, (Fedesarollo, August 2000)

³⁶ Daniel Pecaut, "Present, Passe, Futur de la Violence," in Jean-Michel Blanquer, Christian Gros eds, <u>La Colombie a l'aube du troisieme millenaire</u>, (Editions de L'IHEAL, Paris, 1996).

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Paul Oquist, Violence, Conflict and Politics in Colombia, (Academic Press, 1980).

range of purposes. Violence is reduced when negotiations succeed in diminishing political conflicts and the state is able to recoup some control.

In Ron Ingelhart's analysis, low levels of trust tend to correlate with variables such as: intolerance to outside groups, materialist values, and favorable disposition towards authoritarian governments. These dimensions were captured in a "Survival/Self Expression" cluster of values. While Colombia was ranked in the middle on that cluster relative to other countries, the current environment of physical and economic insecurity would be expected over time to cause a shift to the "survival" end of the spectrum which emphasizes a tolerance for authoritarian government. ³⁹ Inglehart's research on post WWII Europe shows that this type of values shift tends to be generational. Individuals who come of age during a period of insecurity tend to form "security-oriented" values that stay with them as they age, even when conditions improve. ⁴⁰

To summarize, the situation that still broadly prevails in Colombia is one where hierarchical, familistic and clientelist social values exist that are inconsistent with the concept of equality under the law, citizenship and state guaranteed rights. Rule of law is not seen as the primary source of social order that must be defended at all costs. Conflict affecting lower classes is tolerable, even at times desirable, and that which affects elites

³⁹ See. P. 84, in Ronald Inglehard, "Culture and Democracy" in <u>Culture Matters</u>, op cit, and Ronald Inglehart, "Globalization and Postmodern Values" in The Washington Quarterly, Winter 2000.

⁴⁰ P 221, Ronald Inglehart, "Globalization and Postmodern Values," ibid.

can be addressed through negotiations.⁴¹ The control of state institutions is a tool for maintaining the hierarchy rather than reforming the system. Creation of fear through violence is functional when this helps prevent the rise of broader support for political groups or movements that would threaten elite control.⁴²

The combination of class rigidity and non-progressive values has created a society characterized by a limited and family-centric radius of trust, limited participation in political processes, and fragile governmental legitimacy. Lack of legitimacy and progress-orientation within government bureaucracies and armed forces limits their effectiveness. This creates a permissive environment for chronic armed insurrections and the generalized use of violence. Such an environment provides a comparative advantage for large-scale illegal activity such as narco-trafficking that requires low risk of governmental interference to operate. The narcotics industry in turn generates huge financial revenues outside of state control that are used in ways that further weaken the state. There is most likely a strong tendency towards a downward spiral that could ultimately result in collapse of the state and give rise to non-democratic and extragovernmental solutions. This tendency may increase over time if political conflicts aren't resolved and economic uncertainty prevails. The state is then forced to seek outside assistance to address periods of extreme crisis.

⁴¹ The notion of "citizenship" is effectively inoperative. See p. 7, Kees Koonings and Dirk Kruijt, eds, Societies of Fear: The Legacy of Civil War, Violence and Terror in Latin America, (Zed Books, 1999).

⁴² As reported by Pecaut, op cit.

From a cultural perspective, the same constraints that affected the Alliance for Progress seem to be operating today. While these factors should not be seen as unduly deterministic or even universal, consideration of their effect should play a significant role in developing policies and strategies intended to affect parts or all of the system. Failure to take these culture factors into account during development of a strategy will increase the risk of failure.

V. The Constraints and Opportunities of Globalization

Since the end of the Cold War, the process of globalization has created new constraints and opportunities for nation states. Broadly speaking globalization has tended to weaken the capacity of nation states to formulate and implement national policies and has encouraged the fragmentation of political and economic structures. Colombia undertook a major opening of its economy in the early 1990s and has been exposed to these influences. Given its current predicament, it is useful to examine briefly the anticipated impact of globalization in the case of Colombia. The following summarizes some of the main effects that can be expected:⁴³

First, like other countries that seek to leverage global financial markets, Colombia's economic and trade policy has become highly sensitive to private investor preferences.

This imperative limits policy making to a narrow band of market-friendly policies –

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⁴³ The following is based on a more detailed analysis contained in: Olivier Carduner, <u>The Impact Of Globalization On Nation States: European Views And U.S. Foreign Policy Response</u>, (National War College, April 2001).

referred to by Thomas Friedman as the "golden straitjacket." While this qualifies it for IMF support, it also requires Colombia to privatize state enterprises and reduce protection to certain economic sectors. These policy changes while good for long-term growth, reduce employment and increase social disruption in the short term. Second, Globalization encourages the growth of cross-border non-government organizations with single-issue concerns such as environment and human rights. These organizations can be extremely effective at generating either positive or negative publicity on government policies both domestically and at the international level. In Colombia, international human rights organization are increasingly influencial. Finally, globalized communication technology and services has greatly increased the viability of subnational groups of all types, including guerrillas and drug traffickers. Guerrilla and paramilitary groups all maintain their own web sites and foreign bank accounts and enjoy unfettered international and domestic communication through cell phones, satellite phones and email. Political mobilization, money laundering and arms purchasing are made cheaper and less risky than before.

It appears that globalization will either help accelerate collapse of the Colombian state, or force the reforms that will enable it to survive. The process of resolution of historical conflicts has probably been accelerated. Currently, a severe economic contraction has increased unemployment to the historically high level of 20%. It is not clear whether the political situation will allow time for the reform process and the effects of globalization to play out in a way that would help avoid a regime collapse. If the ruling classes begins

⁴⁴ P. 101, Thomas Freidman, The Lexus and the Olive Tree, (Anchor Books, 1999, 2000).

to seriously doubt that international support for Plan Colombia and new economic policies will materialize, they may prefer to slow down the reform process even though this could increase the risk of state collapse.⁴⁵

It is plausible that the dramatic growth of right wing paramilitary forces seen in recent years is linked to globalization dynamics. The "golden straightjacket" of economic policy and increased influence of international human rights groups pressures formal state institutions to maintain policies that are generally consistent with international democratic and open market values. This influence would tend to displace traditional "progress-resistant" views from the open political discussion. It is conceivable that the growing paramilitary influence is a reaction to the government's inability to pursue an effective anti-guerrilla strategy while also conforming to international expectations regarding peace negotiations and democratic dialogue. The paramilitary army by contrast is free of such constraints and may represent an institutional outlet through which the voice of traditional values finds expression.

To conclude, it seems that the process of globalization may be contributing to the weakening of the Colombian State. Existence of broadly held progress-resistant values and large financial inflows from drug trafficking, has contributed to conditions that allow conflictive non-state actors to grow and compete for influence.

⁴⁵ Jeffrey Sachs notes that threatened traditional societies frequently experience collapse rather than carry through economic and democratic reforms. This happens when unresolved political crises lead to large-scale financial crises and deligitimization of the regime in power. P. 36, Jeffrey Sachs, "Notes on a New Sociology of Economic Development" in <u>Culture Matters</u>, op cit.

VI. <u>Implications for U.S. national security strategy in Colombia</u>

The prospects for Plan Colombia seem bleak at this time. President Pastrana is nearing the last year of his one term Presidency and seems to have lost the initiative in the peace process. Guerrillas and paramilitaries, whose leaders don't face a term limit, have all grown stronger. The largest guerrilla group (FARC) may succeed in legitimizing control of territory into the next administration without significant concession. Paramilitaries seem to have taken over the fight against leftist guerrillas in apparent defense of traditional conservative values which will likely lead to more human rights violations. There seems little incentive at this time for serious negotiations.

The portion of Plan Colombia most likely to show success in the near term is the U.S. financed coca eradication program because it is in no party's interest to resist it directly. Narco-traffickers will recuperate any losses by shifting their supply sources to neighboring countries, and can encourage just enough disruption (such as supporting combatants of one side or another) to ensure continued cocaine exports at acceptable risk levels. However, effort to create alternative legal income for coca growers will most likely lag far behind needs given the broader state of the economy.

There seem to be two inherent contradictions in U.S. policy. Like in 1961, the Colombian state is requesting international support for an agenda that traditionally has enjoyed very limited political support, especially when violent conflict was reduced to tolerable levels. Second, success in meeting counter-narcotics objectives may well come

at a price in terms of generating support for democratic, rather than authoritarian values. An eradication-focused strategy will cause significant economic dislocation at a time when the national economy is least able to absorb it. Jobs and incomes will be lost in rural areas, which will likely create a backlash. Combined with the dislocation and fear created by the on-going civil war, we may be helping to create rather than undercut support for non-democratic, authoritarian solutions to restoring social order.

Abandoning U.S. support for the broader aims of Plan Colombia in favor of a narrow counter-narcotics focus, is clearly not desirable given broader U.S. interests. First the U.S. plays such a preponderant role in hemispheric markets that it can't afford politically to be seen as unconcerned with the type of equity and participation gap that underlie the Colombian crisis and that are seen by many as aggravated by the dynamics of open markets. Backing off could contribute to a growing backlash against free trade in the hemisphere. Regional stability is another concern. The Andean countries as a group seem particularly precarious. State collapse in Colombia could significantly weaken investor confidence in the zone as a whole and increase out-migration rates. Finally, narco-trafficking interests would be the first to benefit from the continuing decline and possible collapse of Colombian government institutions.

Finally, we should anticipate that success in reducing cocaine flows from the Andes will at best be limited and short-term in duration. Experience in Bolivia and Peru has shown that with prolonged and persistent effort over several years, including neutralization of guerrilla and drug trafficker related violence, we can influence where coca is grown, and

we can affect the size and number of drug cartels. However, we have not been able to affect whether or not coca is grown, or whether it is processed and exported. Progress on cocaine production and supply will remain controlled by overall consumption demand and the choices made by trafficking organizations to manage risk. These organizations will retain the initiative while enforcement efforts struggle to keep up. For the foreseeable future and until demand is reduced, cocaine production and trafficking will take place. We should therefore treat this as an assumption rather than turn it into a foreign policy goal. This would free us from Vietnam-like progress measures and allow resources to be focused on shaping and disrupting the trafficking industry to minimize its negative effects on other goals.

Given these interests and realities, what direction should U.S. policy take in Colombia? The following recommendations are proposed to help reduce the potential for policy failure.

1) First, clarify and give priority to the political "end state" we should seek to achieve and ensure that all resources are directed at that goal. Resolving the civil conflict should take priority, with drug enforcement playing a supporting role. Eradication targets should be de-emphasized or dropped as a measure of success. This relative shift in emphasis is based on two arguments. First, no progress in suppressing the drug trade will last if the Colombian state collapses. Second, experience has shown that controlling cocaine supply from the region is not likely to be achieved with the resources and tools available. Therefore, putting priority on drug targets over

political settlement increases the risk of failure. Anti-drug efforts focused on disrupting the flow of drug revenues to guerrillas and paramilitaries are consistent with this approach, as are alternative development programs conditioned on voluntary coca reduction by small farmers. The basic idea here is to weaken guerrillas and paramilitaries while avoid cataclysmic change just as the Presidency is entering a lame duck period. While progress may seem slower, extra time may help the economy to stabilize before the next presidential elections in 2002.

2) Seek institutional diversification. This recognizes that supporting central State institutions including the military may have limited impact, and could even be counter-productive, given the cultural and globalization constraints discussed above. The answer is to engage a broader range of non-state and non-government actors at both sub-national and regional levels who are willing and able to co-produce the outcomes we seek. For example, a portion of assistance could be allocated to select local government units that demonstrate progressive values and a capacity to promote democracy-building approaches to social change and rule of law. Perhaps it may be possible to fashion special "democracy-strengthening trade preference zones," where local governments and non-government organizations in particular provinces collaborate to reduce violence, increase social capital, promote progressive-values, and reject narco-industry influence.

3) Strengthen neighboring states. Given the likely hood that the Colombian conflict is likely to be protracted, U.S. policy should seek to minimize potential spill-over effects to neighboring countries such as Ecuador. A broader regional initiative which provides flexibility in use of resources across the Andean region would enable a more flexible response to adapt to traffickers and supported the most effective enforcement institutions.

VII. Conclusion

U.S. Policy in Colombia today seems to be constrained by the same social and cultural forces at play during the Alliance for Progress period. These have the effect of blunting social reform and institutional strengthening efforts as well as increasing the sense of "fog and friction" in strategy implementation. In addition, the effects of globalization have introduced a new dynamic that constrains Colombian government capacity while benefiting conflictive actors. Outlining these dynamic helps elucidate risks but does not in itself yield a clear solution. We can better manage this risk by seeking to be realistic and clear regarding the political objectives sought, broadening the range of actors we engage and trying to limit potential negative impacts on the regional. A better understanding of how cultural change, or can be made to change, over time would be very helpful. Finally, in situations such as Colombia, it should be clear that a vague notion of "supporting stability" may be counterproductive. Perhaps the U.S. and its

international allies should make clear that political change, rather than stability is a more useful goal.